

CIRCULAR NO. 41

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS

AGRICULTURAL EXPERIMENT STATION

SMALL FRUITS FOR THE NORTHERN HALF OF THE STATE
AND HOW TO GROW THEM

By John W. Lloyd

The first of these is the one which is caused by planting upon the soil which is too dry. The atmospheric moisture is not sufficient to keep the plants from wilting, so that the soil is too dry, and the plants are killed, and the third is the one which is caused by the green or yellowish.

Whether or not it is a good idea to grow small fruits for market in the north depends upon the facilities of the grower in handling the crop. In many cases that the large markets are not

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STATE, AND HOW TO GROW THEM.

If given proper care, strawberries, raspberries, blackberries, currants and gooseberries can be successfully grown almost anywhere in the northern part of this state. It is true that the strawberries are sometimes injured by late spring frosts, that the blackberries frequently dry upon the bushes, and that the currant worm usually shortens the life of the currant and gooseberry plantations.

The first difficulty can be largely avoided by planting upon high ground where the atmospheric drainage is good; the second by practicing a thorough-going system of cultivation, so that the soil moisture will be retained, and the third by the timely use of Paris green or hellebore.

Whether or not it will pay to grow small fruits for market in northern Illinois will depend upon the nature of the market, and the facilities of the grower for producing and handling the crop. In general, it may be said that the large markets are usually flooded with

Michigan fruit at the time the northern Illinois fruit ripens. The markets of the smaller towns, however, are often insufficiently supplied. A local grower can sometimes virtually control his home market, even though fruit is shipped in from other points, because of the freshness and fragrance of his product.

Dismissing the matter of growing for market, since that phase of the subject is not of particular interest to a majority of the farmers of northern Illinois, and turning to the more personal matter of growing fruits for home consumption, it may be said that the farmer who spurns the berry patch, and says that he can buy fruit cheaper than he can raise it--and then does not buy it--is denying himself and his family one of the so-called luxuries of life, which, however, may more properly be regarded as a necessity, if the highest development of physical, mental and moral health is to be attained.

The only sure way of having berries upon the farm is to raise them; and the only way to raise them successfully and satisfactorily is to supply the needs of the crop with as great care and precision as is practiced with the other crops on the farm. Thorough preparation of the soil before planting is of prime importance, and liberal fertilizing with stable manure will vastly increase the crop.

Cultivation is as necessary to the production of a good crop of small fruit as it is to the production of a good crop of corn. The style of cultivation to be used will depend

upon the nature of the soil and the kind of fruit. Red raspberries and blackberries should be cultivated with an implement having square-edged teeth, which will cut off all the suckers instead of leaving them to sap the strength of the plant, causing the canes to be weak and the fruit crop light. The implement used for cultivating strawberries late in the season, after sufficient plants have been made, should be provided with a rolling cutter on either side, to cut off the runners and keep the space open between the rows. If strawberries are grown in matted rows, and no more than two crops are to be taken from a plantation, the chief attention to cultivation should be given the first year; and the cultivation that season should be very frequent and thorough, and continued late. The cultivation of the other small fruits should begin as soon as the ground can be worked each season, and should be frequent and thorough until after the fruit is harvested. If a cover crop is to be sown, cultivation should usually cease by the middle of August; otherwise, it may be continued until the close of the season.

In regions where blackberries are subject to winter killing, a cover crop will be found of immense value as a protection to the roots, and should be used unless the blackberries are to be laid down and protected--both roots and canes--by other covering. Strawberries must always be mulched with straw or other litter to prevent injury from repeated freezing and thawing. The same material will serve to keep the berries from being soiled by contact with the earth.

The bush fruits require careful attention to pruning, if the best results are to be secured. Proper pruning insures a stocky growth of the canes, so that they will hold up their fruit, thins

the fruit so that the individual specimens will grow larger, and reduces the size of the top in proportion to the roots, thus insuring a vigorous growth of new wood.

The best pruning for blackberries, black raspberries, and the strong growing varieties of red raspberries (such as the Cuthbert) consists of four distinct operations: (1) Nipping off the tips of the growing shoots in summer when they have reached the height of one and a half or two feet, thus causing them to throw out strong laterals; (2) removing superfluous shoots, so that only three to five remain in each hill; (3) cutting back the laterals to from twelve to twenty inches the next spring; (4) removing the old canes after they have produced their crop.

The annual pruning of currants and gooseberries may be all accomplished at one operation, which is usually performed early in the spring. It consists in removing such of the old canes as have passed their most useful period, and all of the one-year-old canes except such as are needed to renew the bush where older canes are removed; and of thinning out and shortening back the new wood on the old canes that remain.

Current worms, gooseberry mildew, strawberry leaf-roller, and strawberry blight are the enemies most likely to cause damage to the small fruit plantation. They can be controlled by the timely application of the proper spraying materials, and the practice of other sanitary precautions, such as the burning over of the strawberry bed after harvesting the crop.

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